

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Examining a Cross-cultural Distance Education Course: An Ethnographic Case Study

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The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to explore how different distance learning modes and environments affect the design and implementation of a cross-cultural, university-level, distance education course. The case chosen was a U.S. -Taiwan collaboration that used H.323 videoconferencing and Web 2.0 technologies. Through participant observation, document analysis and interview, this study investigated the factors that influence the instructor's pedagogical practice with new technologies in relation to the cross-cultural aspects. It also examined the various types of interactions that occurred as consequences of the distance learning modes and the contexts of the course.

The findings provided a portrait of factors and relationships that affected the implementation of the curriculum and the enablement of technology affordances. They suggested that the instructor's personal value and intrinsic motivation, well-supported technology framework, and a long stable international partnership helped sustain her engagement in cross-cultural distance education (CCDE). While the instructor's high self-efficacy prompted her to idealize technology affordances in the CCDE course, her

limited technology literacy hindered the enablement of these affordances and resulted in different outcomes. In addition, difference in the teaching styles between the instructor and her international partner, unbalanced learner preparedness, and the Western value-laden learning environment were also factors that contributed to the gap between the idealization and the realization of the CCDE course. Implications and suggestions for future practice and research were provided in relation to the literature, as well as the contexts of cross-cultural/international distance education.